



Ask
your
folks

HOW
TO

A handy guide to help you have the sometimes-difficult conversation with ageing loved ones about home care.

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YOUR PARTNER IN CARE

Exclusive to



We know that people want to stay at home for as long as possible and that there are clear benefits associated with doing just that.

However, more and more families and friends are facing difficulties in how to support their older loved ones while ensuring they are safe and secure at home.

The support needed may start with:

- **driving** – to the shops or appointments
- **helping at home** – with laundry or personal care
- **maintaining the garden** – mowing the lawn or watering plants
- **cleaning** – vacuuming or dusting
- **preparing meals** – and doing the dishes

Later, the care they require may become more significant as mobility and cognitive skills decline.

Therefore, talking to your loved ones about the options available to help them stay at home and remain independent is crucial.

However, we know it's easy to put off these conversations because we fear they may be difficult. For many older people, these conversations are often interpreted as a judgment on their ability to remain independent. They may feel worried that their independence might be taken away from them if they need some help.

The 'birds and the bees' is often cited as one of the more uncomfortable conversations a parent will have with their child. However, they do it because they know it is important. Just as your parents had the conversation with you, having the discussion about how your parents or loved one wants to remain independent as they age can be as confronting and difficult, but just as important.

So, this guide has been designed to help you have these discussions. It will provide you with information and practical tips about how to start the conversation, find out what your loved ones would like and together agree on the best way forward.



These conversations may be uncomfortable, but they are very important. The health and well-being of your loved ones will make them worthwhile and give you peace of mind.

Jo Lamble – Clinical Psychologist



Why do you need to have the conversation?

There are lots of proven benefits for older people living at home and maintaining their independence for as long as possible.

But how do you know what is important to your parent or loved one? All too often we make assumptions. It's important to understand their preferences, ensuring they know about their home care options and supporting them to make informed decisions.

If you know what your loved one wishes, you can help them no matter where they are on their healthcare journey now or in the future.

Uncertainty can be avoided if you talk to your loved ones before they face major health or ageing issues, or a serious incident takes place.



When to have a conversation about home care?

The simple answer is now.

Unfortunately, the conversation is inevitable. Due to feelings of discomfort, families often don't have these conversations or plan ahead before serious health issues arise and then they end up having to make decisions after an incident, without understanding their loved one's wishes.

Even if your parents don't need assistance at home at the moment, it's likely that they may in the future. The later you leave it the harder the conversation can be.



Who should have the conversation?

It can be too confronting for an elderly person to be faced with the entire family talking to them about their future needs. You don't want it to feel like an intervention. Instead, it is a good idea to consider who is the best person to lead the conversations and report back to everyone else. In most families, one person naturally assumes this primary role because he or she lives nearby, has a closer relationship with the elderly relative, or simply is a take-charge person.



Preparing for the conversation

Preparing for the conversation should include doing some research so you have some basic information about the home care options available. If your loved one is open to the conversation, they will have questions. You may not be able to answer all of them instantly, but this will provide you with a further opportunity to revisit the conversation once you have the answers.

There are a number of misconceptions about home care and these may be raised too. A few common misconceptions are:

- **Home care is only for those who are really sick or very old.**

Government funding availability is always subject to assessed needs, however we recognise that each person has their own individual goals, ambitions and circumstances.

The myHomecare team work with you to develop a tailored plan to meet your needs either within approved or privately funded frameworks.

You may enjoy doing the gardening but need support to mow the lawns or you might just need a little helping hand with cleaning those tough jobs around the house. The choice is yours.

- **Home care takes too long to be approved by the Government.**

There are many home care funding options available from the Australian Government, however wait times can sometimes be lengthy.

The myHomecare team take the worry from you by developing your personal client plan and providing regular updates and information.

We help you along every step of the way from preparing your documents to be assessed to what you need to do once your funding has been allocated.

We also work with you on interim home care options, either through transitional program support or privately funded options.*

*Subject to availability and assessments

- **There is only one 'package' of care available.**

There are many home care options available from a little help around the house through to clinical nursing or allied health.

Funded packages are approved by the Australian Government however we work with you to ensure you maximise your available funding and develop your individual plan.

If your circumstances change or you are able to fund home care yourself, we're here to guide you and develop a plan to ensure you're always happiest in your own home.

For more information about accessing home care, important information and guides, head to www.myhomecare.com.au



Conversation starters and the best techniques to engage your loved ones in the conversation

Reassure your loved one that you want to find out what they think, and that you are there to listen, not control.

Try not to anticipate what your loved one might say or how they will react.

“We’ve been thinking mum/dad, have you ever thought about what you’d need if you were to stay living at home?”

OR

“I’m guessing that you’d like to stay living here, but I’d really love to know what your thoughts are.”

Remember that this is not a one-off conversation. Express your love and concern and, most importantly, listen.

Look for opportunities to start the conversation. Older people often discuss what has been happening to their friends and family and their health issues.

“Your friend Margaret has some help around the house, have you thought about what you may need down the track?”

OR

“Aunty Sal sounds like she’s been having a tough time. Does she have anyone in to help her?”

Invite your loved one to share his or her feelings.

“I love you and I really want to understand what you think and how you feel.”



What happens if they don't want to have the conversation?

If you do get push back with regards to the conversation, acknowledge what you see and add a layer of empathy between each statement.

"I can see this is upsetting you and I understand that you may not want to talk about this. I am only asking because I care about you and want to make sure I understand your wishes so that you can stay at home as long as possible."

"There's no hurry. We don't have to talk about it now. Have a think and let's chat later. Remember that this is all about how to help you get what you want."

"I can see you're worried. What's going on? I want to reassure you that no one is trying to take away your independence or your control. We want to help you stay at home."

If your first discussion doesn't go well, don't give up and make sure you try again later. Time between conversations gives your loved one an opportunity to consider and reflect on what you are trying to talk to them about. Have simple to read brochures and guides available so they can understand the options in their own time.



Conversation closers

It is likely that you will have several conversations with your loved one. On each occasion, gently try to get agreement on the next steps, even if the next steps are to revisit the conversation a few weeks later.

“I now understand that you don’t like the thought of people coming into your home and you don’t think you need any help. So, let’s leave that idea for now, but at some point it would be good for me to know what might be useful down the track when you need it.”

“OK, so I can hear that you don’t want someone coming in every day, but you wouldn’t mind some help with cleaning once a week. Have a think and we can talk again soon if you change your mind about getting more help.”

“It’s clear that you only want some help with the lawns and garden, so let’s see if we can get that organised for you. Later, we can chat about whether you’d like some support in the house or some help getting to your appointments.”

It is important that your loved ones are involved in all decisions, so that they remain in control of their future.

Making decisions on their behalf without consultation automatically removes some of their independence, which is exactly what they may fear.

Wherever you are at in the conversation, *myHomecare* is here to help because we believe people are happiest at home

Now that you've completed this handy guide be sure to head to our website or Facebook page for regular updates on asking your folks.



Call **1300 20 90 20** OR visit myhomecare.com.au
Facebook [@myhomecareaus](https://www.facebook.com/myhomecareaus)